

*The Principles of Infidelity and Faith  
consider'd in a comparative View.*

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TWO  
DISCOURSES

Preached before the  
UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,  
AT  
St. MARY's in the Morning,  
AT  
St. PETER's in the Afternoon,  
ON THE  
First Sunday in Lent; March the 21. 1768.

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TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
THE EARL OF *COVENTRY*,  
LORD OF THE BED-CHAMBER  
TO THE KING,  
AND LORD LIEUTENANT  
OF THE COUNTY OF *WORCESTER*,  
THESE DISCOURSES  
ARE WITH THE GREATEST ESTEEM,  
GRATITUDE AND HUMILITY,  
DEDICATED  
BY THE  
AUTHOR.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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LORD OF THE BED CHAMBER

TO THE KING

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THREE DISCOURES

AND WITH THE WEST ESTABLISHMENT



GRATITUDE

DEDICATED

BY

the genuine Hebrew from the  
 of the Hebrew were now to be

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This indeed was not to be an absolute and  
 universal Rejection — Only *Blindness* in Part  
 was to be sent down upon them — *But*

ROM. XI. 20.

*Well! because of Unbelief They were  
 broken off, and Thou standest by Faith:*

**T**HE different Effects of *Infidelity*  
 and *Faith*, are here set in an op-  
 posite View, and very justly ap-  
 plied to the particular Circumstances of the  
*Jews and Gentiles* — The Apostle's reasoning  
 in the greatest Part of this Chapter is carried  
 on in *figurative Allusions*, but with Strength,  
 Elegance and logical Propriety.

A wonderful Scene of divine Providence,  
 the *Mystery*, which had been hid from *Ages* and  
 from *Generations*, was now to be opened and  
 made *Manifest* to the *Saints*; The *Fullness* of  
*Time* was come, when the middle-wall of *Par-*  
*tition* was to be broken down, the *Sceptre* was  
 to depart from *Judah*, and They, who had  
 long been the boasted Descendants from *Abra-*

A

ham,

*ham*, the genuine *Branches* sprung from the Root of the pious *Patriarchs*, were now to be cut off and cast away.

This indeed was not to be an absolute and universal Rejection — Only *Blindness* in Part happened to *Israel*: There was still a Remnant according to the Election of Grace, v. 5. — But though the Rays of the Divine Mercy still continued to shine upon some of them, yet far the greatest Part were totally excluded from the glorious Rights and Privileges of the Gospel. —

We cannot indeed comprehend the *Depths* of the Divine Counsels, but many wise Reasons may be assigned for this remarkable Appointment of Providence — It was not an arbitrary *Designation*, or the Effect of capricious *Humour* in the Deity, but was absolutely necessary for the Enlargement of the *Church* of God, and for the Opening of a wider Door of *Salvation* to Mankind — The *Fall of the Jews*, as the Apostle expressly tells us, was to be the *Riches of the World*, and the diminishing of them the *Riches of the Gentiles*, v. 12. When the *natural Branches* were cut off, the wild *Olive Tree* was grafted in, and by the invigorating Power of God, was made Partaker of the same Root.

Such



Such was the Wisdom of this *Appointment*, that it afforded a very useful Lesson of Instruction both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*; that the *Jews* might learn *Humility*, be provoked to *Jealousy*, and by a Spirit of holy *Emulation*, might be called to *Repentance*. And on the other Hand, that the *Gentiles* might not be high-minded, but *Fear*; that They might not boast against the *Branches*, lest He, that spared not the natural *Branches*, should not spare Them, v. 21.

What could be more natural and lively *Emblems* than these? more expressive of that great *Revolution*, which was now to be brought about, both in the *Jewish* and the *Christian* Church? As it was the solemn *Decree* of God, so it readily claimed the Approbation of the *Apostle*, as a just and righteous Appointment. — Well! says He, *because of Unbelief*, They were broken off, that is, the *Jews*, and Thou, meaning the *Gentile* World, standest by Faith.

In this wonderful Scene, behold the *Goodness* and *Severity* of God, v. 22. — In what striking Colours are the *Smiles* of his *Mercy*, and the *Frowns* of his *Anger* jointly displayed? From these Examples, what a noble Encouragement is given to true Believers to stand stedfastly in that blessed *Faith*, which be-

came the *Glory* and *Riches* of the *Gentiles*? but what an awful Admonition is held forth to all *Unbelievers*, to avoid an *evil Heart of Unbelief*, which brought such a heavy Train of Calamities upon the *Jewish State*?

The Infidelity peculiar to modern Times is indeed of a different Genius and Complexion from that which the Apostle lays to the Charge of the Jews, but though there be not a *formal Likeness* between them, yet in every Species of *Unbelief*, there is some general Resemblance, some Affinity of Principle productive of many evil and dangerous Consequences. — The Use therefore, which I shall make of the Words thus opened and explained will be, First, to represent to You in as short a View as possible, the various ill-concerted Schemes of Unbelievers, and to point out their Inconsistence both with Reason and Religion.

2dly, I shall set in an opposite Light the many superior Advantages, which arise from a true Christian *Faith*.

And from this comparative View I shall be naturally led in the third Place, to give an *Answer* to some of the principal *Pleas* of Unbelievers, and to conclude with a brief Application of the whole.

*First*

*First* then, I shall represent to You, in as short a View as possible, the different *Schemes* of Unbelievers, and shall point out their *Inconsistence* both with Reason and Religion.

As there are several Species of *Infidelity*, so They are more or less malignant in their Kind, and more or less productive of evil Consequences: — *Atheism*, is of the blackest Dye; by denying the God of Nature, it subverts the whole *System* of Nature, the established Order, Harmony and Constitution, of the whole World.

It is a sure *Deduction* of Reason, that *Effects* are not producible without a Cause; *Things* cannot exist, neither *animate*, nor *inanimate*, without some *Ground* of that Existence; at what Period of Time soever They began to be, they must derive that *Beginning* from some Principle adequate to such Productions. It is certain therefore, that variable and dependent Creatures, such as the Things before Us, could not *emerge* out of Nothing, or be in themselves *unoriginated*, but must at first be caused by some necessary, self-existent, and independent Being, which is the *Notion* we have of God.

Upon these Principles we rest as upon a sure Foundation, Difficulties are cleared up,  
and

and We have a Supreme *Cause* and *Maker* of all Things, equal in *Counsel* and Strength to all the *Phænomena* of Nature within Us, or without Us.

○ But the Atheist takes a very compendious Method of throwing *Darkness* over all. — He cuts the Argument short by asserting, that the *World* was from all *Eternity*, and that there always has been an infinite *Series* and *Succession* of *Causes* and *Effects*, from whence the whole visible System was compounded and modified into its present Form. — We may justly ask, what has this Hypothesis to stand upon? even Nothing. — It wants a *First Maker*, and a *First Mover*: But what concern is it to the superficial Atheist, upon what Basis the *Foundations of the Earth<sup>a</sup>* are fastened, or who laid the Corner Stone thereof? Job. xxxviii. 6. He flatters himself, that He can accomplish all by the word *Eternity*, which He ascribes to *Matter*, though in Defiance of all Reason and Philosophy. Even Sense itself in all the obvious Appearances of Things, ex-

<sup>a</sup> Quis illa vidit unquam? Quis sensit? Quis audivit? An solus *Leucippus* oculos habuit? Solus *Mentem*? Qui profecto Solus omnium cæcus et excors fuit; Qui ea loqueretur. quæ nec æger quisquam delirare, nec dormiens possit somniare — Lactant Lib. de Irâ Dei p. 730.



plodes and confutes his *Scheme* — If We survey the *World*, or examine into its *History*, what glaring Marks of *Novelty* are stamped upon it? The Rise of *Nations* and *Empires*, the growing *Progress* of *Arts* and *Sciences*, of *Government*, *Commerce* and *Religion*, all plainly shew, that the *Face of Nature* was but the *Offspring* of *Time*, gradually encreasing from an infant State of Weakness and Imperfection, and going on though with slow Degrees, and with many Interruptions, from *Strength* to *Strength*, to its full Maturity and Perfection <sup>a</sup>.

Let the Series of Causes and Effects be what it will, suppose it to rise higher than the strongest *Imagination* can trace it, yet in the utmost Stretch of it, this *Line of Progression* must have a *Beginning* as well as an *End*. — The first *Link* in this long extended *Chain* could not produce itself, nor could it possibly exist without some Original *independent Cause*. The distance of *Time* or *Place* are only contingent Circumstances, and could make no Alteration in the essential Nature of Things. —

The Atheist indeed, who never thinks himself at a Fault, is very expert in answer-

<sup>a</sup> *Antiquitas Seculi, Juventus Mundi*. Bacon. de Augmen  
Scient. Lib. i. c. 5.



ing, that this visible *Frame* of Things might probably take its rise from the lucky Union and Concourse of *Matter* and *Motion* — But what great *Atchievements* could come from these undirected and unintelligent Principles? The Properties of *Matter* are well known; it is of itself an inert, sluggish Body, of such *stubborn Inactivity*, that it resists all *Change* of its present State — And *Motion*, necessary and involuntary *Motion*, (which is all that can be supposed) must always act in one determinate Course, equally and at all Times — It must verge towards one *central Point*, and without *Variation*.

What could be the Result of such an unconscious and unguided System, even below the Laws and Arts of Mechanism itself? What vital Force could there be in a *rude indigested Chaos*, to call itself into Being? Sometimes the Atheist is so straitened and bewildered in his Scheme, that He calls in the Assistance of blind *Necessity* or *Fate*. — Instead of ascending step by step, from the Effect to the supreme *intelligent Cause*, He descends in his Reasonings, and sinks below the Effects themselves, by supposing those Things to be *Effi-*

*a rudis indigestaque Moles.*

*cient*

*cient Causes*, which have no inherent Power of *Agency*, and indeed no Existence at all. —

In his last resource, when pinched with these Difficulties, He has but one *Salvo* left, and that is *Chance*: He pretends, that the *fortuitous Clashings* of Atoms one against another might possibly after infinite Trials and Struggles, settle into Order and Regularity — But what is this mighty *Operator, Chance?* an *empty Sound*, a mere abstract Notion without any Reality.

A Man, that can give himself up to such a *Turn* of thinking and arguing, must have a strong Imagination indeed, fit only for mere *Romance*; without *Intelligence* or *Design*, without any Exertions of Power, Art or Contrivance, to imagine, that the vast *Machinery* of this World, compounded of innumerable Parts, consisting of various *Wheels* and *Principles of Movement*, with infinite Relations and Dependencies one upon another, but all tending to Harmony in the whole, and all

a. Hoc qui existimat fieri potuisse, non intelligo, cur non idem putet (si innumerabiles unius et viginti Formæ Literarum aliquò conjiciantur) posse ex his in Terram excussis Annales Ennij, ut deinceps legi possint, effici; quod nescis, anne in uno quidem versu possit tantum valere *Fortuna*. Cic. How infinitely greater must the Odds be against the Power of *Chance* to form a World?

B

adorned

adorned with Beauty and Proportion, with the most consummate *Wisdom* and *Magnificence*, — to suppose this amazing complicated Structure to have no other finishing Hand than an irresistible Stroke of *Fate*, or the casual *Conflicts of Matter*: this is certainly the wildest and most *romantick* Plan, that ever was invented by the human Mind — It deviates so much from the *Path of Nature*, that it would be too tedious to follow it through all its *Turnings* and *Windings*.

Its pretended Philosophy has no Foundation, no solid Principle of Reason to support it — The whole visible System remonstrates against, and condemns the *Fool*, who says in his Heart, *there is no God* — The Apostle makes his Appeal to the plainest dictates of common Sense — The *invisible Things of God*, says he, from the *Creation of the World* are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead, Rom. i. 20. His Voice,<sup>a</sup> (which as the Psalmist expresses it, is a *mighty Voice*) is heard through all his Works.<sup>a</sup> Not only the

<sup>a</sup> Ipse Aer nobiscum videt, nobiscum audit, nobiscum sonat: Nihil enim eorum sine eo fieri potest. Cic. de Nat. Deorum, Lib. ii. c. 33.

most striking Objects, the vast and numberless *Orbs of Heaven*,<sup>a</sup> their regular *Motions* and amazing *Distances*, but even the lowest and minutest Parts of the Universe *proclaim the Glory of God* and *shew forth his handy-work* — Every *Spire of Grass*, and every *Clod of Earth* carry the same Impression, the same heavenly Characters of the Divine Being.

Such is the Language of *Universal Nature* : — This is the grand *Medium*, through which the Knowledge of God is conveyed to Us, and from the same Principles We are taught to look up to Him, not only as the Sovereign *Creator* of the World, but as sustaining all things by the *Word of his Power*, and exhibiting to Us the most illustrious Displays of his divine Perfections in all the Ways of his *Providence*.

There are many indeed, who pretend to acknowledge the *Being* of a God, but, little better than *Atheists* themselves, they will not believe his *immediate Interposition* in the Affairs of this World.

<sup>a</sup> a Cælestem ergò admirabilem, incredibilemque Constantiam, ex quâ Conservatio et salus omnium omnis oritur, qui vacare mente putet, is ipse Mentis expers habendus est. Cic. de Nat. Deorum. Lib. ii. c. 33.



But in the whole *Oeconomy* of Things, how visible are the Traces of infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Power, presiding over all? Are there not fixed and established Laws for every *Class* and *Tribe*, for all the several *Compartments* of Nature; *Laws*, which uniformly tend to the particular Preservation of every distinct Species of Being, and to the general *Good* of the whole compacted System?

To instance only in a few Particulars — The grossest material Objects, though *unintelligent* themselves, are not without the Direction of *Supreme Intelligence*. It is amazing to think of it, but a certain Fact it is, that a Principle of *Gravitation* pervades all the *Particles* of Matter, and with mysterious *Energy*, works through the whole — This was the great *Bond* of Connexion: By this it was, that the Almighty Creator *weighed* the *Mountains* in *Scales*, and the *Hills* in a *Ballance*, that He *stretched out* the *North* over *the empty Place*, and *hanged the Earth upon Nothing*, Job. xxvi. 7.

In the *animal Kingdom*, how are the Creatures of God multiplied, cloathed, adorned and fed? With what a various Art and Care

a Cum rerum Natura nusquam magis, quam in minimis tota sit Natura. Plin. H. Nat. Lib. ii. c. 2.

are

are They furnished with proper Arms for their Defence? The Powers of *Sensation* and *Self-Motion*, are in different Degrees, common to them all; but it is very observable, that their Instincts, Appetites and Affections, are peculiar to their kind, which always operate with one uniform Direction, and are suitable to their Natures, Wants and Capacities: The intellectual System, as it rises higher in the *Scale* of Being, advances nearer to God — As reasonable Beings, we are partakers of the *divine Image*, little *lower* in *Dignity* than the *Angels themselves*; Imagination, Memory, and all the Faculties of the Soul *confute* the Laws of *Mechanism*, as by no means adequate to their divine Original, which could be derived only from the *Father of Spirits* and of *Lights*, the *Author* of every good and perfect Gift. The sublime Attainments of the rational Mind, are *stamped with the Image of God*, and could only come from Him, in whom *are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*. Indeed the Ordinances of *Nature* may seem to vary in some Instances, but she is always constant to her own Rule: Her Characters are indelible, not embossed upon the *Surface*, but deeply *inlaid* in the very inmost Nature and Essence of Things — Through every part, the  
divine

divine Power is transfused, mingled and incorporated with the whole Mass.

A Plan so vast and extensive, and as the Psalmist expresses it, like the *great Mountains*, fixed and *invariable*, who could form but the all-comprehending Mind of that Being, who is *great in Counsel* and *wonderful in working*? Or what Hand but his could preserve and support this visible Frame and Constitution of things, either in its general Construction, or in its great Variety and Subordination of Parts, in all its extensive Distributions and multiform Appearances, all conspiring with Unity of Design to universal Order, Harmony and Proportion? This is a glorious Field of Contemplation open to every ones View, but the busy Hands of wicked Men endeavour to plant *Thorns* and *Briars* even in the plainest Paths of Nature: They tell us, that *the Ways* of God are *unsearchable*, and that all our Reasonings about *Providence* are *dark* and *intricate*, above the Reach of human Understanding.

But though we cannot comprehend all the secret Counsels of Heaven, though we can-

a Spiritus intus alit, totosque infusa per artus  
Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.

Virg. *Ænid. Lib. vi. v. 724.*

not

not see the intermediate *Ties* of Connexion between the *Cause* and the *Effects*, nor unfold the manner, in which the grand and comprehensive Scheme is carried on, whether by the sole Energy of the divine Power, *like the Soul of the World*, as some speak, or whether subordinate Ministers appointed by God, may bear a Part in the Administration of Things, yet the *Monuments* of his Glory and Goodness shine conspicuously in every System of the Universe; They are written in the strongest Characters in the *whole Volume of the Book of Nature*, and he that runs, may read them; We see, says a Disciple of Plato, a *Chain or Order of Government reaching from Heaven down to the Earth.*<sup>a</sup>

But the Unbeliever rather than ascribe Honour to the divine Being, solves all Difficulties at random, and ascribes the whole Course of Nature to *second Causes*.

But what are *second Causes* more than useful Props to this great Machine? They are only

<sup>a</sup> Διαδοχὴν ὁρᾷς καὶ πλεὺν ἀρχῆς καταβαίνουσιν ἐν τῇ θεῷ μέχρα γῆς.  
Max. Tyr. Diff. *prima* apud Hinem. How surprizing is it, that this same Writer, Diff. 30. should deny the Utility of putting up Prayers to the Deity? It is a strong Proof that the most enlightened Heathens had but weak and imperfect Notions of rational and spiritual Devotion.



the inferior Instruments of *Providence*, acting by the *Operation*, or at least, *free Permission* of the *First Cause*. — This may be aptly illustrated, though in a lower Degree, by the *Spring* and *Wheels* of a *Watch*, which are the *instrumental Causes* of *Motion*; but it was the *Hand* of the *Artificer* that placed them together, and by a just Arrangement of the several Parts, caused every Movement to work with Uniformity, and with proper Force and Direction. Whether we suppose the Government of the World to be carried on by the immediate Agency of the supreme Being, or by what some call a subordinate<sup>b</sup> *Plastick Power*, it is still God, who is the first great *Mover* of

a Hoc dico, fulmina non mitti a Jove, sed sic omnia disposita, ut ea etiam, quæ ab illo non fiunt, tamen sine Ratione non fiant, quæ illius est, Vis eorum, illius *Permissio* est — Nam et si Jupiter illa nunc non facit, fecit ut fierent. Sen. Nat. Quæ. Lib. ii. p. 716. It may not be improper to add that noble Declaration of *Marluis Torquatus*, who finding *Anius*, after an insolent Speech of his, lying dead at the Foot of the Steps of the Temple dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus, cried out, *Bene habet, Dii pium movete Bellum, Est cæleste Numen, Es, magne Jupiter; haud frustra Te Patrem Deum Hominumque hæc sede sacravimus.* Liv. Lib. viii. c. 6. b Dr. Cudworth's Notion of the *Plastick Natures*, and that of Dr. Grew in his *Cosmologia Sacra*, which he calls a *vital Principle*, was the Occasion of much Altercation between Le Clerc and Mr. Bayle. See Dr. Birch's *Life of Cudworth*.

all Things, the *vital Principle*, which animates the whole — *Those Things*, says *Plato*, which are said to be done by *Nature*, are indeed done by *divine Art*.<sup>a</sup>

Unbelievers are still hatching new Objections, which like *little Insects*, are of a fruitful Growth, and of a quick *Production*, but of a short *Duration* indeed. As though all was right, if They could but throw God out of the World, they endeavour to contract the vast Immensity of his Being within narrow and finite Bounds, to take the *Reins* of Government out of his Hands, and to make him a mere idle unactive Spectator of this lower Scene of Things.<sup>b</sup> They represent Him as so involved in *pompous Ease*, or *indolent Dignity*, as if an Inspection into earthly Affairs would disturb his Happiness and Self-Enjoyment — But what can be difficult to Almighty Power? — in the Language of the Prophet, *Is the Spirit*

<sup>a</sup> Τὰ φύσις ἀσχετὰ πύσσει, θεὸς τέχνη. *Plato* in *Sophista* p. 168. Oper.

<sup>b</sup> Omnis enim per se Divum natura necesse est  
Immortali Ævo summâ cum Pace fruatur,  
Semota a nostris Rebus, sejunctaque longe,  
Nam privata Dolore omni, privata Periclis,  
Ipse suis pollens Opibus, nihil indiga Nostri,  
Nec bene Promeritis capitur, nec tangitur Irâ.

*Lucret. Lib. 1.*

*of the Lord straitened? Are these his Doings? All Nations are before Him as nothing, but as the Drop of the Bucket, or the small Dust of the Ballance: Is. xl, 15.*

Neither can his Government of the World in any respect weaken or break in upon the *Plenitude* of his Glory — So far from it — It is his supreme Felicity to *do good*; It is the very Strength and Essence of his *Goodness*, with an *unsparing Hand* to communicate Happiness to his Creatures.

Neither can We deem this heavenly and paternal Care as beneath the Majesty of the most high God — It no more sullies the Lustre of his divine Perfections *to look down upon us with the Light of his Countenance*, than it darkens the *Brightness of the Sun to shine upon the Earth*.

Some Unbelievers indeed seem willing to adjust the Matter by a sort of *Compromise*, to allow an universal *Plan* of Providence over Nations and large Communities of Men, but, (as though it was too much for God) they will not believe his immediate Interposul in the private Concerns of *individual Persons*.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Deorum Providentiâ Mundus administratur, iidemque consulunt rebus humanis, neque solum universis, verum etiam singulis. Cic. de Divin. Lib. 1.

But Who has *known the Mind of the Lord?* or, *Who has been his Counsellor?* Rom. xi. 34. Does it become Man to prescribe Laws to the divine *Legislator*, or to set bounds to his Dominion? If Men were governed *collectively*, and not *individually*, how could the great Ends of Government be answered? This would relax the Authority of the divine Being, contract its Influence, weaken the Ties of Obedience, and enervate the Force and Spirit of his Laws — The *Sceptre of his kingdom* could not be a *right Sceptre*, but rather, a *mock Jurisdiction*, without a personal Regard to his Subjects — The very idea of *Moral Government* supposes a continual Inspection into the Moral Conduct of the *governed*: If the *omniscient Eye* of God did not penetrate into the Thoughts and Actions of Men, they could not be *Moral Agents* accountable to him, their Prayers and Praises and every act of Devotion would be but *vain Oblations*, and we could be arraigned at no *Tribunal* but that of *Man*.

This undoubtedly is what the Unbeliever aims at, and therefore he retorts upon us again, and tells us, that though we have visible Traces of a divine Energy working through the whole corporeal System, yet the *Moral World* has none of these divine Characters im-



pressed upon it, that it is a *Sphere* of Darkness, Disorder, and Confusion, where *Wisdom* is so far from presiding, that there is much Evil and Imperfection on every side of us, and that the Distribution of things is so unequal and irregular, that we daily see *Virtue* oppressed, and *Vice* triumphant over its Ruins — This is a heavy Charge against the established Constitution of Nature: How therefore shall we solve this Difficulty and vindicate the *Ways* of God? It is not a *Knot* so hard to be untied, as the Unbeliever would have it.

Can it be thought, that the same gracious God, who rules over the whole material World, should overlook the moral System with *Indifference*, and pay no regard to its sacred Appointments, whether good or evil? *Nature* would be very deficient indeed, if a Profusion of Wisdom and Skill was spread over the Face of the Earth, even its meanest and minutest Parts, but no *Footsteps* of the same Beneficence appeared in the most worthy and weighty Concerns of intelligent Beings; What a dark *Chasm* would this be in the sublime Regions of Providence, where its Glory might be expected to shine in its greatest Splendor?

But the Constitution of things is not so full of *Blemishes* and *Imperfections*, as some represent

sent it — The moral Oeconomy is the peculiar Object of the divine Care and Cognizance — Human Nature in its whole Texture is neither entirely perfect, nor constitutionally wretched. — There is as much Dignity to adorn as Corruption to deface it. What kind *instinctive* Impressions do we feel within us, which with the *softest Delicacy* pre-engage the Affections and gently guide them, as with the *Cords of Love*, to the practice of *Virtue*? How do those generous Sentiments, *Compassion, Gratitude, Natural Affection* and *Benevolence*, spring up in us, even prior to the Operations of Reason as the genuine *Seeds of Nature*? They are as pleasing to the *Moral Sense*, as *Harmony* to the Ear, or *Beauty and Proportion* to the Eye --- With what sovereign Authority does *Conscience* preside over all, as a supreme Judge, with an *accusing* or *excusing* Power over our Conduct?

There are indeed some internal Principles, which seem to act with a contrary Bias; the *Appetites* and *Passions* often rebel against Reason, but they are implanted in us for many wise and excellent Ends, and if kept under due Regulations, may be rendered subservient to rational, as well as sensual Enjoyments — Even *Self-Love*, though its main Object is  
*private*

*private Utility*, is a Principle, that may by an easy Direction be made conducive to *publick Good*: But if the Infidel can find no Fault with the internal Frame of our Constitution, he then turns his Objections against the external *Evils of Life*, as a great *Flaw* in the divine Administrations; as though God, like the *Heathen Deities*, had *forgotten to be gracious*, and was entirely regardless of the *Miseries* of his Creatures. But upon a due *estimate* of Things, it will be found, that the natural Evils of Life are commonly the *Fruit* of our own *Doings*, or they often arise from our connexions in Society, or from other incidental Causes, and that in many Instances they are really useful and necessary, to try, improve, and perfect Virtue.

For want of these Reflections, some have invented two independent *Principles*, the one, the *Author* of Good, the other, the *Author* of Evil: --- But what can be a greater Indignity to the sole *Monarch* of the World, than to divide his *Empire*? What can be more subversive of the Nature and End of Government than the Supposition of two *overruling Powers*, equal in Force, but opposite in Design? Or what could be the result of such jarring Interests, but *Anarchy* and *Confusion*? A King-  
dom

*dom divided against itself cannot stand: Mat. xii. 25. The Unbeliever* always big with gloomy Apprehensions still aggravates his Charge, and urges *Moral Evil* with all its train of Consequences as the highest *Solecism* in the Scheme of Providence.

But we may as well ask, why we were not placed in the Condition of Angels, as why we were made liable to Snares and Temptations, to Vice and Infirmary? Great indeed is the Depravity of Nature, but, however weak and corrupt, we are not of Necessity *slaves to Sin*; nor doomed to a final Reprobation by an absolute and *irrevocable Decree*. As we are *free Agents*, the guilt of Sin must lie at our own Doors; it is in no respect chargeable upon the great Author of our Being, but upon ourselves---God *has made Man upright*, but they have *sought out many Inventions*: Eccl. vii. 29. If any are not satisfied with these short *Solutions*, let them consider the World in a comparative View; How much is *Good* prevalent over *Evil*? How much does Happiness overballance the *Miseries* of Life? The *bright Side* of our Constitution will soon scatter the *dark Shades* of it, will dispel all Doubts and Fears, and set before us innumerable Monuments of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, and of the



the superior Excellencies of our Nature above all other sublunary Creatures.

Let us farther take into the Account, that if there be an unequal Distribution of the Things of this World, if *there be one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked, to him that sweareth, and to him that feareth an Oath,* We are hence assured that This is only a State of trial and discipline, preparatory to another, which is eternal and unchangeable, A State when all inequalities will be rectified and adjusted in *Weight and Measure.* The *Drama is not finished*; when the *Plot* is unravelled, when the last *Scene* comes on, and all the various incidents are explained, the whole *Piece* will appear in its full Beauty and Perfection—*Judgment will break forth as the Light, and Righteousness as the Noon Day.*

Thus we see, that a *God, a Providence, and a Future State,* are Truths connected and linked together in the *Chain of Nature.*

But here the Unbeliever is more than ever alarmed; A *State of Retribution* in another World is to him a most disagreeable *Scene,* and therefore the *dark Curtain of Oblivion* must be drawn before it.—

But if moral Considerations will have no weight upon his Mind, let the Cause rest upon  
on

on the Evidence of natural Principles ; He is indeed a professed *Materialist*, but all the *Operations* of the Mind confute him, not only the most sublime, but even the most imperfect Faculties, the lower *Appetites*, *Sensations* and *Passions*, which could no more be the Production of any compounded System of *Matter*, than *Light* could spring from *Darkness*, or *Liberty* from blind *Necessity*.<sup>a</sup>

Every *Atom* might as well be called a *thinking Being*, as any Composition of material Particles whatsoever, or rather with much greater Propriety—For the subject of Thought and Reflection must be one simple uncompounded Essence, distinct from and superior to all the Properties of Matter;<sup>a</sup> and of such a *Substance*, though invisible, we may have as clear Conceptions, as of any bodily Substance whatsoever — We cannot but be sensible that we have this thinking immaterial Principle within us, which we call the *Soul*, not like the Body, liable to Dissolution, but indiscerptible in its Nature, and free from all the

<sup>a</sup> Lord *Bolingbroke*, in order to solve the Phænomena of thinking, talks of an *intellectual Spring* — But how is this *Spring* to be *modified* and tempered ? With what Degrees of Force and Elasticity ? This new invented *spiritual Machine* is a Contradiction in Terms — It may answer the Ends of Ridicule but not of sober Reasoning.

*Seeds* of Corruption, and when dislodged of its *earthly* Tabernacle, how reasonable is it to conclude, that it will subsist separately, and be rather renewed than *cramped* in its Freedom, Vigour and Activity? <sup>a</sup>——

But besides the *Immortality* of the Soul, we may add many other collateral Proofs or *Pledges* of a future State: The Dignity of human Nature cannot stand without it; Our eager thirst after Knowledge, our earnest *Longings* for Immortality, the Powers of *Conscience*, the *Hopes* of the Righteous and the *Fears* of the wicked, do all by a kind of *Anticipation* look forwards to a Life to come: And what is this Expectation beyond the *Grave*, but the *Voice of Nature*? It is confirmed by the Sentiments of *Heathens* as well as *Christians*, by the concurrent Testimony of all Ages and all Nations<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Quid multa? Sic mihi persuasi, sic sentio, cum tanta Celeritas Animorum fit, tanta memoria prætorum futurorumque Providentia, tot Artes, tantæ scientiæ, tot inventa non posse eam Naturam, quæ res eas contineat, esse mortalem. Cic de Seneca Cap. ii. <sup>b</sup> Ut Deos esse opinemur, qualesque sint, ratione cognosciamus, sic permunere Animos arbitramur consensu Nationum omnium. Cic. Tusc. Lib. i. c. 16.

Et apud Senecam. Ep. 117. — Cum de animarum Æternitate differimus, non leve momentum apud nos habet consensus Hominum aut timentium Inferos aut colentium.

When

When *Arguments* are drawn out at large and in their full Strength, they certainly appear with greater Advantage, but such are the glaring Absurdities of *Unbelievers*, that they are easily confronted and in few Words; a little Reflection will wipe off the *Stain* of their Objections, and *put their Ignorance to Silence*: As far as we have advanced, let us now consider the horrid Consequences of Infidelity.

The Atheist sets out upon the poorest Principles, He must offer a Violence to his own Reason, and rebel against the frequent *Remonstrances* of his own Heart — rather than believe a God, He wanders about, *like a Child of Chance*, in a *Labyrinth* of his own devising, and the farther He goes, the more He is lost and bewildered.

He glories indeed in being free from all the Restraints of Religion, but He fetters his own Understanding, and only entrenches himself in a *Spider's Web*: He may boast perhaps of *Honour*, *Virtue* and *Benevolence*; But what is that *Honour*, which *cometh not from God*? Or what is that *Virtue*, which springs from no *Root*, no solid Principle of Duty? Or what is that *Benevolence*, which neither looks at  
home



*home* nor *abroad*, neither regards his own true Interest, nor that of his Fellow-Creatures? While He strives to get rid of his *Fears*, He loses every *Glimpse* of *Hope*, and every rational Species of Comfort; Neither is his Condition much bettered, if He does allow the Existence, but not the *Providence* of God.

Without this, *Man* would be but a forlorn and destitute Creature; He would want his best and strongest *Staff* to guide and support him through the *Journey* of this Life: It was a noble saying of the Emperor *Marcus*, and more than once repeated by him, that *He would not endure to live one Day in the World, if He did not believe it to be under the Government of Providence*<sup>a</sup>.

Without the conscious Sense of the overruling Power of God, we could not be happy even in the midst of *Greatness* and *Prosperity*; and in the dark Hour of *Adversity*, where could we fly for relief and succour? If we sought the favourite Remedy of the *Atheist*, and denied a *future State*, this would be but a poor *Lenitive* to a Mind full of Heaviness and Sorrow. The very prospect of *Annihilation* is

α ἡ δὲ ἐ π οὐκ ἔστιν, ἡ ἔ μίλη αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀνθρωπείων, π μὲν ζῆν ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ καὶ ἡσυχίᾳ, ἡ Προνοίας καὶ — Mar. Antonin. Lib ii. Sec. 11. et rursus, Lib. vi, Sec. x.

gloom and dismal, the *Soul* startles and recoils at the very Apprehension of it.—

Without a trust and Confidence in God, and a reasonable Expectation of a *Life* to come, how hard would be the Lot even of the best and greatest of Men? raised with distinguished Excellence above this visible Creation, but after a few Years, dropping into nothing, only upon a common Level with the *Beasts* that *perish*;—ever thirsting after Knowledge and spiritual Improvement, but sinking into the *Bed* of Ignorance and Darkness; panting for *Reward*, but defeated in the *Prize*; running the *Race* of Honour and Virtue through a thousand Dangers and Difficulties, but never reaching the long-wished for *Goal* of Rest and Happiness: What a miserable *Exit* would this be, unworthy of God, unworthy of Ourselves, only to dye, and dye only to be forgotten? \*

We are told indeed of one, who was hardy enough to become a *Martyr* for *Atheism*—*Vanini* is produced as an Instance of this desperate kind—but how absurd for any Man to be the *Patron* of such a hopeless Cause, and

a Præclarum autem nescio quid adepti sunt, qui didicerunt se, cum tempus Mortis venisset, totos esse perituros; Quod, ut sit, quid habet ista Res *letabile* aut gloriosum? Cic.

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to quit his *All* in defence of it? If his Opinions be right, what Advantage does He gain above the lowest *Reptile* upon Earth? But if they are wrong, how dreadful is the Consequence? He is undone for ever —

Let common Experience tell us, with what *Misgivings* of Heart Men of Atheistical Principles generally fall from the *Precipice* of Life. — If not by their own Hands, (which has often been the Case) they go off the Stage in fullen Grief, for want of *Faith*, not able to believe, and for want of *Grace*, not able to repent; or if *repenting*, it is rather the Effect of dark *Despair*, than a rational well-grounded hope of Pardon and Forgiveness.<sup>a</sup>

But now let us turn the Perspective, and go on as I proposed in the 2d. Place to view in an opposite Light, the many superior Advantages arising from a true Christian *Faith* :

By *Christian Faith* I mean a rational and well-grounded assent to the Truths of the Gospel. The Foundation is firm and good, and the whole *Superstructure* rises in just Proportion and with equal Greatness.

<sup>a</sup> — It being with Them, as *Cicero* says, it was with *Epicurus*. Quo nemo magis ea, quæ timenda esse negabat, timebat, Mortem dico et Deos. — *Cic.*

To the Honour of the Gospel it may be said, that it is a System of Religion perfectly *pure* and *undefiled* in all its Parts, worthy of its divine Author from whom it came, and truly adapted to the Frame and Constitution of Man, to whom it was given. — Its original Plan was not of *Yesterday*; It did not start suddenly into *Form* and *Order*, but was deeply layed in the *Counsels* of God; It commenced in the Eye of Providence from the *Foundation* of the *World*, was gradually unfolded, and confirmed through a long Succession of Ages by new *Revelations* from Heaven; all of which harmoniously conspired as to one great *Point*, to the Consummation of the Gospel by *Christ Jesus* —

With what exact Precision, and with what regular Uniformity, were the *great Lines* of this Dispensation marked out by a long Series of Prophecy? It was a *Progressive Scheme* carried on with one uninterrupted *Design*, and with such a wonderful Train of Events, as none but the divine Wisdom and Power could possibly ordain.

In its first opening, the Gospel was ushered in with many peculiar Circumstances, which were striking Evidences of its Truth, and very  
dis-



distinguishing *Preludes* of its future Glory: The general *Expectation* of both Jews and Gentiles at this critical Juncture, the *Preaching* of John the Baptist, the *Proclamation* of Angels, and afterwards according to the *Predictions* of Christ himself, the *Appearance* of False Christs, the *Rumours* of Wars, *Pestilences*, *Earthquakes*, *Famines*, and more especially, the *Destruction* of Jerusalem; — These all proclaimed the *Kingdom* of the *Messiah*, the *new Creation*. The *natural* as well as the *moral* World gave Testimony to it —

The Life of the blessed Jesus was the fairest Transcript of what he taught, a most perfect Pattern of all Holiness and Virtue: The *Signs and Wonders* which he wrought, were the most illustrious Displays of his divine Authority, such as no Man could do, except God was with him; They were not *Works of Darkness* done in a Corner, before a little Circle of Friends, but in Places of publick Concourse, and in the open View of his greatest Enemies, both Jews and Gentiles.

Neither did his immediate Followers discover the least *Symptoms* of *Imposture* or *Enthusiasm* — The Apostles were Men of no Education, of the greatest simplicity of Manners,  
Eye-

Eye-Witnesses of the facts they related, and uninfluenced by worldly Motives, either Pleasure, Profit or Honour. — In defiance of all the Horrors of Persecution, they triumphed over all the united Powers of Darkness, and with an amazing Progress *went on conquering and to conquer*, and at last, They sealed the Truth of their Doctrines with their own Blood; From this Seed, the Word of God *sprung up and prospered*; It took Root downward, and brought forth Fruit upwards, speedily and abundantly —

These are only a Part of those divine Characters, which are stamped upon the Gospel; there are many other, and indeed irresistible Proofs of its coming from God, which will appear, if we consider those fundamental Points of Religion, a God, a Providence, and a future State —

With regard to God, the Scriptures exhibit to us the most rational and sublime Sentiments —

Our Understandings are not given up as a Prey to the wild Reveries of *Atheism*, to blind Fate or *Necessity*, but agreeably to the Doctrines of Reason and true Philosophy, they are directed to one supreme independent Cause, the great Author of Nature, who in the *Begin-*  

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ning

ning commanded *Light* out of *Darkness*, *Order* out of *Confusion*, and by his *creating Power*, called the *World* into Being —

He is described as the *Centre* and *Source* of all *Greatness* and *Goodness*; In *Wisdom* as infinite, unerring and all-perfect; In *Holiness*, as of *purer Eyes* than to *behold Iniquity*, in whose *Sight the Heavens are not clean* and the very *Angels are charged with Folly* :

In *Goodness*, as shining with the mildest *Rays of Benignity and Love* : In *Justice*, no *Respecter of Persons*, *holding forth the everlasting Scales of Righteousness and Truth* :

In *Mercy*, *rejoycing against Judgment*, and ever ready to turn the *Ballance* in favour of the humble *Penitent* :

In *Power*, able to do all *Things*, to make the *Heavens over our Heads*, *Brass*, and the *Earth under our Feet*, *Iron*. Deut. 28.23.—

In all his several *Attributes*, eternally and immutably the same, without *Variableness* or *Shadow of Turning* :

When any of the *Perfections* of the *Supreme Being*, his *Omniscience* or *Omnipresence* are the *Subject*, with what *Sublimity* does the *sacred Diction* rise above itself? With what *Variety* and *Copiousness* of *Expression*, with what *Dignity* and *Grandeur* of *Thought*, with  
what

what noble *Images, Figures* and *Allusions* do the inspired Writers *strain* their utmost Powers both of *Nature* and *Grace* to *find out* the *Almighty* to *Perfection*? To *Perfection*! indeed it is impossible; It is as *high as Heaven*, what can we know? deeper than *Hell*, what can we do? <sup>a</sup>

But it must be allowed, that the finest Descriptions of the Deity are to be fetched from the Scriptures, as much transcending all other Writers in *Beauty* and *Loftiness* of Style, as in *Truth* and *Purity* of Sentiment — The *Well* indeed is *deep*, but from this Fountain of divine Knowledge, we draw the best and purest Streams. —

From hence we learn not only to *know God* and *Jesus Christ*, whom He has sent, but to *glorify him as God*, to love, reverence and obey Him — This Knowledge is not like that of the Unbeliever; It is so far from *puffing up*, that it truly *edifyeth*; It is *Life eternal*, and *will make us wise unto Salvation*:

And as the Scriptures give us the most noble and exalted Ideas of the divine Nature,

a Sed ex rei Difficultate æstimamus ejus Magnitudinem, dumque Animus laborat id complecti, quod ejus Angustia non capiunt, is ipse Labor atque irriti Conatus incredibilem quandam Granditatem exprimunt. *Loruth*, Præl. 16. p. 195.



so they enlarge our Views of his Providence, and direct us to look up to Him as the supreme Ruler of the Universe, in whom, We live, move, and have our *Being*.

In what an amiable Light is this sovereign and superintending Power of God described? not as guided by a capricious Humour, or the rigorous severity of a proud imperial *Monarch*, but as *continually watching* over us for our *good*, as governed by the wisest Counsels, and influenced by all the kindest Endearments of Love and Affection.

Neither is his Goodness circumscribed by the narrow Bounds of *Space*, like *Henah*, *Ivah*, or *Sepharvaim*, or like *the Gods of the Hills* and not of *the Vallies*, but widely diffused over all his Works — His Care extends not only to collective Bodies of Men, but even to the lowest and minutest Beings in the Universe: We are bid to consider the *Lilies of the Field*, and *the Fowls of the Air*, and by these tender and affecting Images are put in Mind, how much man is the peculiar Object of his Regard and Cognizance: — We are told that not a *Sparrow falls to the Ground* without our *heavenly Father*, how much greater Reason then have We to recognize his Goodness, which is poured out upon us  
with

with such unbounded Love and Affection, that the very *Hairs* of our *Heads* are all numbered?

This distinguished Concern of Heaven for Man is not the *Offspring* of vain Imagination, neither is it, as a late *Writer*<sup>a</sup> insinuates, the *Effect* of human *Pride*, owing to high *Notions* of human Importance, but it is the *Gift* of God, the established Order and *Prerogative* of our Nature; and the higher this *Preeminence* in the divine Estimation is, the more it inspires *Humility* and *Gratitude* to the great *Author* of our Being, of *whom*, and *through whom*, and *to whom* are all *things*:

Let any one look into the Passages above alluded to in the Gospel. *Mat.* 6. 28. What inimitable *Scenery* is there presented to us, drawn by the divine *Pencil* from the Works of Nature?

What a ravishing Prospect must this be to the true Believer, who knows, that it is God, who *filletb all in all*, who pervades, actuates and sustains the universal System from the highest to the lowest, but especially the rational and intelligent World, the Subjects of his moral Kingdom, who are governed, not by

a Lord Bolingbroke, V. 5. p. 418.

compulsive means destructive of human *Freedom*, but by such suasive and moral Influence, as is consistent with the *Perfections* of God, the *Laws of Morality* and the *Nature* of Man? —

Concerning the *external Evils* of Life, the Christian Doctrines are very interesting and important; They do not affect a *Stoical Insensibility*, an utter *Exemption* from all the Feelings of Grief and Sorrow; but they soften the Rigour of the *Pain*, by teaching us, how to bear it — The Gospel-Precepts do not *rebel* against *Nature*, but instead of extirpating, they compose the *Passions*, preserve the Peace and Harmony of the Mind, and by shewing us the true End of Affliction, they extract *Good* out of Evil, and turn the *chastening Rod* into a Blessing. —

a It is very observable, that the brightest Virtues among the Heathens were apt to fail them in the Hour of Distress — *Brutus* was a warm *Advocate* for *Liberty*; He was fired with a Kind of *Enthusiasm* for the Love of his Country, but He could not sustain his Spirits in the Time of Adversity — His *Maganimity* was then lost in a Fit of Despondence — Oh! *Virtue*, says He, I have worshipped Thee, as a *substantial Good*, but now I find, Thou art an empty Name:

And *Lipsius* in his last critical Moments was not to be amused and flattered with the vain Principles of *Stoicism*; These He ingenuously confessed to be weak insufficient Supports, and pointing to the *Picture* of the *Blessed Jesus* near his Bed, *That*, says He, is the true Foundation for Patience:

Indeed

Indeed the *darkest Gloom*, which covers the Face of Nature, arises from *moral Evil*, but this can by no means be urged as a just Re-proach against the Appointments of Providence. — Christianity considers the human Constitution in its true and genuine Light, with all the *Adjuncts* of Humanity, with all the Frailties and Infirmities incident to it. —

Though *Corruption* be deeply wrought in our Nature, yet We know, from whence it rises, and what is the Remedy appointed for it. — By Faith and Repentance, through the Merits of Christ, we shall be *made whole* : The natural Man may droop and languish under that insupportable Burden, the *Body of Death* ; but the Gospel bids us be *of good Comfort*, and lifts up our Hearts to God, who has *given us the Victory* through our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. —

In this World perhaps the best of Men may be *persecuted for Righteousness Sake* ; It may be their hard undeserved Lot to be oppressed,

Indeed *Celsus* endeavours to depreciate the Character of Christ Himself as not equal in Courage and Patience to *Epistetus* — I shall refer the Reader to *Origen's Answer, Origen contra Celsum* p. 368. and shall only observe, that true Fortitude and Magnanimity were never so much displayed, nor so well supported, by any of the greatest Heroes of Antiquity, as by the Blessed Jesus, and his Followers in the first Ages of Christianity.

while



while the *Wicked flourish like a green Bay Tree* — but the most unequal Dispensations of Providence will not stagger the *Faith* of a Christian; He will not fret himself because of the *Ungodly*, but will go, like *David*, into the *Sanctuary of God*, and with a pious and composed Frame of Spirit, will consider the irregular Appearances of Things in this World, as no more than Inequalities upon the *natural Surface of the Earth*; They will be found, when properly viewed in the *Glass of Providence*, to be only discordant *Parts*, which really tend to *Harmony* in the whole, or at least, if not rightly ballanced in the present System, the imperfect Scenes of this *Life* will be regulated by the righteous Governor of the Universe with the strictest Justice and Equity in *the Life to come*.

And This is another Advantage derived from the Gospel-Dispensation; It has *abolished Death* and brought *Life and Immortality to Light*; which Words are not to be understood in an *exclusive* Sense, as though before the *Coming of Christ*, there was a total Ignorance of future *Life and Immortality*, but that this great and important Doctrine of Religion was much illustrated and enforced, that many Doubts and Difficulties were dispelled, and

new

new Proofs superadded to those of Nature by the Gospel-Revelation. — Indeed the Sentiments of Nature had an easy Bent and Direction towards the Belief of a future State; This Principle was wrought in the Heart of Man, and was supported by many probable Deductions of Reason, but how often was it buried under a Load of Absurdities, either obscured by the *Intricacies of Philosophy*, or bewildered by the inventive *Notions and Fables of Poets*. — Under the Christian Scheme, how much are these Expectations strengthened and enlivened? how obvious are They even to the *Babe in Christ*, even to the youngest Proficient in the *School of Jesus*? The *Promise, which Christ has promised us, is eternal Life*; It rests not upon mere Speculation, or the uncertain *Range of Men's Fancies*, but upon a firm Foundation, the Word of God himself: This is the *Prize of our High-Calling*; It is our *Hope*, our *Joy*, our *Crown of rejoicing*; It is sealed and confirmed to Us by the *Resurrection of Christ* himself, and explained and enforced by those solemn Assurances, that our *Souls* shall be re-united to our *Bodies*, and that all shall appear in the great Day of *Account* before our *Blessed Redeemer*, our

F Faithful

*Faithful High-Priest*, who is ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead.

With what Dignity, and under what affecting Images of Love as well as Terror, are these Circumstances represented to Us? and what Influence ought They to have upon our Conduct? This is a fruitful Source of Comfort to the true Christian, but what a Damp ought it to strike upon the vain Spirit of Infidelity? The Principles hitherto considered and compared want only to be weighed in the Scale of impartial Reason; It does not requite the *Depths* of Philosophy, or any extraordinary *Reach* or *Intenseness* of Thought, to determine on which Side the Advantage lies — The first Reflection is sufficient to convince any reasonable Person, that the true Believer sets out upon the best and surest Grounds, and that both in the Progress and End of his Journey, He chooses the only Path, that can lead Him safely to Truth and Happiness: But the Infidel tramples both Reason and Religion under Foot, He glories in his Shame, in being an Outcast from Heaven, and without God in the World. —

And if We examine into other Branches of Infidelity and consider them likewise in a comparative View with the true Faith of a Christian,

Christian, we shall find, that *other Foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*: 1 Cor. 3, 11.

But this will be the Subject of another Discourse. — I shall only at present observe, that bad *Principles* are generally productive of bad *Morals*; When heretical Opinions have once stained and corrupted the Mind, *Virtue* soon becomes an uneasy and unwellcome Guest; but *Vice* finds an easy Passage; The Door is as it were opened for its Reception — And when *Infidelity* and *Iniquity* are jointly leagued together in the same Cause, what can check their unhappy Influence? or purge out such a *Leven of Malice and Wickedness*?

The *Poison* is of so *infectious* a Nature, that it will spread itself, and of so *malignant* a Kind, that wherever it spreads, its Effects are mortal. —

Of all unbelieving Principles the most dangerous, the most injurious both to our temporal and eternal Interests are those, that strike at the Foundation of all natural and revealed Religion by denying a *God*, a *Providence* and a *Future State*. — These not only invert the Order of Nature, the origi-

\* Quantam Fenestram ad Nequitiam patefeceris. Ter.



nal Constitution of the human System, but are subversive of the Happiness and Well-Government of *civil Society*; They loosen the *sacred Bands*, by which it is cemented together, and spread Confusion through all its Branches, through all the several *Relations, Subordinations and Compartments* of the whole Community. <sup>a</sup> — In a Word, they take away the Force of all the *Judgments* of God, of all his *Precepts* and *Promises*, and weaken the very *Hinges*, upon which all Government, both divine and human, must turn, the *Hopes* of Reward, and the *Fears* of Punishment.

Let us therefore avoid that *evil Heart of Unbelief*, which draws after it such a Train of *Evils*: — Let us not make *Shipwreck* of our Faith by being tossed to and fro by every Wind of *Doctrine*, but let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, that Faith, which overcometh the World, which is the

<sup>a</sup> It seems to me, says Montequieu, that the *Epicurean Sect*, which made its Way into Rome towards the Close of the *Republick*, contributed much to corrupt the Hearts of the *Romans*; The *Greeks* had been infatuated with it before Them, accordingly They were sooner corrupt; And He adds likewise, that *Cyneas* having discoursed on the *Epicurean System* at the Table of *Pyrrhus*, *Fabricius* wished, that all the *Enemies* of Rome might hold the *Principles* of such a *Sect*: Grandeur, c. 10.

*Basis* of all our Hopes, and *without which it is impossible to please God* : Heb. 11, 6.

Let us *seek the Truth pure and uncorrupt, as it is in Jesus, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy* : For the Foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal — the Lord knoweth them, that are His ; and let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity : 2 Tim. 2, 19.

Hark of all our Hopes, and without which it  
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 becometh them, that are His; and in every one  
 that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from  
 Unbelief: 1 Tim. 2, 8.

## ROM. XI. 20.

*Well! because of Unbelief They were  
broken off, and Thou standest by Faith:*

**I**T is an old Remark\*, that there is no Opinion so absurd, which some minute Philosophers have not maintained; and in this Age of Free-Enquiry, it is too much verified in the Examples of Unbelievers, who make loud Pretences to Reason and sometimes to Religion, but advance Doctrines inconsistent with both; — even where the Path of Knowledge is plain and easy, They often entangle it with Thorns and Briars, and throw Doubts and Difficulties in the Way, where common sense, or even the instinctive Impressions of the Mind might guide them, as

\* Nihil est tam absurdum, quod non aliquis e Philosophis afferat. Cic.



in the Road of Nature, with Truth and Certainty. —

If they do not absolutely deny those essential Points of Religion, the *Existence of a God, a Providence, and a Future State*, yet it is very observable, that they often speak of these important Subjects with an affected Air of *Indifference*, or with some peculiar *Distinctions*, or under some forced *Limitations*, which really weaken and do Dishonour to that *System*, which they would be thought to support. —

It would be easy to produce Instances of such sophistical Methods in *Deistical Writers*:

With regard to the *Deity*, how common a Thing is it, to find them by some nice and intricate Subtleties, some *metaphysical Jargon* or other, debasing his *Essence*, diminishing his Perfections, or putting them out of *Sight*, as wrapped up in entire *Darkness*, out of the Reach of human Reason.<sup>a</sup> — Perhaps in

a Such are the Sophistical Reasonings of Mr. Hume, who endeavours to weaken the Argument drawn from the Course of Nature in Favour of a God, a Providence and a future State, by falsely suggesting, that the *Connexion* between the *Cause* and the *Effect* can be known to us only by *Experience*, and therefore, as God is a *singular Cause*, and the Universe a *singular Effect*, we can fetch no Argument from Analogy and Observation concerning them. From which Quibble He would insinuate, that We know nothing at all about them: See Hume's Philosophical Essays. Sec. 7. part I. p. 317.

general

general Terms, the *Providence* of God may be one *Article of their Creed*, but when They come to explain it, how often is it that They stick at some Difficulty? or their Reasonings are so confused and perplexed, that it is hard to know, what They do, or do not believe: They are fond of raising some futile Objections against the moral Government of God, if not the natural, or against the *Mode, Extent, or Influence* of divine Interposals in this lower World. —

Or if they acknowledge a *Future State*, It is with some *Reserve*, some artful Insinuation or other; either the *Resurrection*, the *Reunion of Soul and Body*, the *Day of Judgment*, or the *Nature, Duration*, or perhaps the *Manner of Rewards and Punishments* must be called in Question, or some *Mist of Scepticism* be cast over them. —

We seldom find, that They keep up to their own pretended Theory — In spite of their own speculative Systems, They are very fruitful in inventing some little Cavils or Exceptions, as much to the Prejudice of natural as of revealed Religion, — a plain Indication, that They wish those Truths to be false, which with all their Chicanery they cannot disprove. —

G

These

These Principles being considered, and the false Methods by which Unbelievers endeavour to support them, I shall now proceed, as I before proposed, to enquire into other *Branches* of Infidelity, with regard to moral *Virtue*, its *Nature*, *Obligation*, *Extent* and *Effects* :

And here We have so many Refinements, that it is hard to follow the Steps of such vague incoherent Schemes, by interchangeable Succession one Absurdity crouded upon another. — Some pretend, that *Virtue* and Vice are no permanent Realities, and that They are so far from being the same in all Countries and in all Ages, that They entirely depend upon *Mode* and *Custom*. —

Indeed the *Fashion* of different Countries may often vary — Among some People, even *Polygamy* and *Incest* have been stamped with the publick *Seal* of Approbation : But though *local Customs* and *Prejudices* may warp the Mind, and give a false Byass to Men's Principles as well as Actions, yet the *Nature* of Things is not so ductile and pliable as to be moulded into any Shape by mere *Fancy* or *Opinion*. — The Foundation of moral *Virtue* is deep and strong, not like a *Reed*, to be

a Fable of the Bees, p. 372, to 379.

*shaken*

*shaken with the Wind, or the vain Imaginations of Men, but the Basis, upon which it stands, is eternal and immutable as the Divine Mind itself.* <sup>a</sup> It is so far from borrowing its Completion from national Errors, that it bears a uniform and unalterable Likeness to the moral Perfections of the Deity, the same, *Yesterday, to Day, and for ever* : It is founded upon the *Fitness and Relation* of Things, is congenial to the Laws of Reason, and so well adapted to the inward Frame and Constitution of Man, that the whole System of *Humanity* rests upon it, as it's chief Felicity and Perfection. <sup>b</sup> — We may as well therefore suppose no real Distinction between the most wholesome *Food* and the most malignant *Poison*, as confound the Ideas of *Good* and *Evil* by a vain Surmise, that there is no *essential Difference* between them :

<sup>a</sup> Nec si regnante Tarquinio nulla erat Romæ scripta Lex de Stupris, idcirco non contra illam Legem sempiternam Sex. Tarquinius vim Lucretiæ attulit ; Erat enim *Ratio* profecta a rerum Naturâ, & ad rectè faciendum impellens & a Delicto avocans, quæ non tum denique incipit Lex esse, cum scripta est, sed tum cum orta est, orta autem simul est cum *Mente divinâ* : Cic. *de Leg. Lib. 2.*

<sup>b</sup> Est enim Naturâ sic generata Vis hominis, ut ad omnem Virtutem percipiendam facta videatur ; ob eamque causam parvi Virtutum simulachris, quarum in se habet Semina, sine Doctrinâ moventur. Sunt enim prima Elementa naturæ, quibus auctis, Virtutis quasi Carmen efficitur. Cic. *de Fin. Lib. 5.*

A Prin-



A Principle *self-evident* in itself needs no *Definition* to settle its Nature; and by what *Criterion* soever We judge of Virtue, whether by the *moral Taste*, by the *Relation* of Things, by *Truth*, *Utility*, *Self-Love* or *Benevolence*, it corresponds with every Test, and is invariably good, just, becoming, beautiful.—

But how fluctuating are the Notions of Unbelievers? and how repugnant to each other? *Clouds without Water*, as *St. Jude* expresses it, *carried about of Wind*: There is another Class of Moralists of near Affinity to the former; They both of them place Virtue upon a *sandy Foundation*, with this Difference only, that as the One make Fashion and Vogue the only Measure between *Right and Wrong*, so the Others make the *Will* of the *Magistrate* the only true Standard of *moral Rectitude*.<sup>a</sup>—The Abettors of this Scheme are aware, that *Virtue* will soon be forsaken, if left to shift for itself, naked and abandoned to its own Fortune, and therefore by calling in the Aid and Assistance of the civil Power, They erect

<sup>a</sup> Hobbes. *Leviathan*. c. 29. In another Piece, He also asserts, *Leges civiles esse regulas boni & mali, ideòque quod Legislator præceperit, id pro bono, quod voluerit, id pro malo habendum esse* — Et *Seditiosum esse dicere Cognitionem boni et mali pertinere ad singulos. De Civ. c. 12.* —

a false *Battery* round it, neither supported by Nature, nor sheltered under the Wings of divine Protection—a mere Political Plan loaded with the heaviest Absurdities—It is *imperfect*, *precarious*, *immoral* and *irreligious*. —

*Imperfect*, because a great Part of moral Duties are out of the Reach of Man's Eye, and cannot come under any civil *Jurisdiction* whatsoever. —

<sup>a</sup> *Precarious*, because it unhinges the natural System, and according to the uncertain Directions of human Authority, makes *Religion Law*, and *Law Religion* — It is an *immoral Scheme*, because it undermines the very Foundation of *Morality*, and robs it of its native Excellence by making it only a mere *Engine* of civil Polity. —

And it is *irreligious* in the highest Degree, because it sets aside all divine Obligation, and recommends a virtuous Conduct only for its *publick Utility*, or in Submission to the *Magistrate*, not for *Conscience*, nor the *Lord's Sake*.

a Nec verò aut per Senatum aut per Populum Solvi hâc Lege possumus; neque est quærendus explanator aut interpret ejus alius — Nec erit alia Lex Romæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthâc; sed omnes Gentes et omni tempore una Lex et sempiterna et immutabilis continebit; unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium Deus. *Cic. de Rep. lib. 3. apud Laftan. Inf. Div. Lib. 6, c. 8.*

There

There is another Set of *Deists*, who appear in a more pleasing and respectable Form, but without the real *Power of Godliness*; They paint *Virtue* indeed in the brightest Colours, and with all the attracting Charms, which the warmest Imaginations can give it<sup>a</sup>; The Plan is amiable in many Respects, but how often is it darkened by artificial *Shades*, and its natural Features disfigured by unnatural Refinements?

It is very observable, that these Pretenders to a moral Delicacy of *Taste* are too apt to overlook the *divine Virtues*, which ought to be the leading and governing Principles of Duty<sup>b</sup>; If they do not totally expunge, they are very languid in expressing the pious Affections and Dispositions of the Mind towards the Deity; Their Scheme of Morality ends, where it ought to begin; As though God was last in Dignity and Worth, more Attention is paid to our social Connections, than to our highest Relations to the Deity. —

On these two Commandments, the Love of God and our Neighbour, hang all the Law and the Prophets, not on the Latter exclusive of the Former, or in Preference to it: One of

a Lord Shaftsbury.

b Characteristicks. V. 2. p. 266, 267, 268.

these extraordinary Advocates \* for moral Excellence is adventurous enough to disclaim the Use and Efficacy of *Prayer*, if not as a Mock Incense, yet as no better than a mere *mechanical* Sacrifice, conducive neither to the *Glory of God*, nor to the Benefit of the most humble Suppliant. —

Thus Virtue is robbed of her best Attire ; Without a Principle of Obedience to the supreme Being, its greatest *Beauty* is defaced.

But many of these *Theorists* tell us, that a Regard to the Deity in Hopes of *Recompence* at his Hands is mere *Selfishness*, that Virtue is its *own Reward* and then only amiable and lovely, when embraced for its *own Sake*. —

But can it be thought, that these *sentimental Feelings* will be sufficient to influence the Actions of Men, and to keep them within the Bounds of Duty ?

We have an animal as well as a rational Nature within us, and some more forcible Means, than mere *Speculation*, are necessary to curb the Passions, and to reduce the Will into a regular and uniform Obedience. — The greater Part of Mankind, as the Psalmist expresses it, must be *held in by Bit and Bridle*, and unless their *Hopes* and *Fears*, which are



the strongest Principles of Action, are wrought upon, They will become an easy Prey to the Allurements of Sin. — No Obligations and no Restraints can strike so deep upon the Minds of rational Creatures as the supreme Will and sovereign Authority of God, and no Sanctions can be so alarming and powerful, as the divine *Promises* and *Threatnings* :

To say, that these are *mean* and *mercenary* Motives, is the highest Absurdity; A *coercive Power* is necessary in all Government both divine and human; without which the Laws of Nature would soon be trampled under Foot. — And the *Hope* of Reward is so far from betraying a sordid disingenuous Spirit, that it is the noblest *Spur* to Virtue, the laudable Ambition of a good Mind contending earnestly for its Prize, and reaching after true Glory, the ultimate End of its Labour.<sup>a</sup> — There is no Principle, which can quicken our Endeavours with greater Energy, nor cause the Worth and Amiability of moral Goodness to shine forth in a fuller Lustre. — How therefore do *Unbelievers* wander in their Principles? What a strange Mixture of Inconsistencies? New Doubts and Cavils, like *thick Vapours*, continually rise upon old ones,

<sup>a</sup> Οὐκ ἔστι ἀγαθόν τιμῆ. Plato de Leg. Lib. 5.

and

and spread Darkness round the whole *Atmosphere* of Infidelity. —

They are no less Strangers to the *Extent* than to the Nature and Obligations of Virtue. —

We are told, that nothing can be a *Part* of Religion, but what is *essential* to Man, and founded upon the *Law* of Reason: This is a favourite *Turn* of Expression frequently made use of with an oblique Design of casting a Slur upon all *positive Institutions*, which are set in the most odious Light, as *Infringements upon human Liberty*, and the *natural Rights of Mankind*, arbitrarily commanded for *commanding Sake*:<sup>a</sup>

It is true, Positive Duties have no inherent Goodness in themselves; They derive their Obligation from the Will and Authority of the Legislator; But has not God a Power of prescribing the Conditions of his own Favor? Is not Obedience to his Commands of what kind soever an Act of *moral Duty*? And if such Commands have a *moral Tendency*, if they are *Means* happily made choice of for wise and good Ends, for the promoting of Holiness and Virtue, why is it not worthy of the Wisdom of God to ordain them, or of the

<sup>a</sup> Christianity as old as the Creation.

moral Nature of Man to obey them? As *Subsidiary* Helps to Religion, They are certainly productive of the most excellent Effects, and what *God has joined together*, let *no Man* dare to *put asunder* :

But this is not all — Many other *superfluous* Duties are laid to the Charge of revealed Religion. — *Mortification* and *Self-Denial* are called *Monkish Virtues*, which in the Language of the Unbeliever, *stupify the Understanding* and *harden the Heart*, *obscure the Fancy* and *sour the Temper*:<sup>a</sup> Strange Effects indeed ! It is to be feared, that this Objector has some such Feelings within himself, though from another Cause.<sup>b</sup> — Suppose, that *Mortification* and *Self-denial* may sometimes cross the natural Bent of our Inclinations, are They therefore unnecessary ? or rather, are they not wise and suitable Restraints, a proper Exer-

<sup>a</sup> Hume's Essays — Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals. p. 188.

<sup>b</sup> Indurandus est animus, & a Blandimentis Voluptatum procul abstrahendus; Vina Hannibalem solverunt, & indomitum illum nivibus atque Alpibus virum enervaverunt Fomenta Campaniæ: Armis vicit, vitiis victus est. Nobis quoque militandum est et quidem genere Militiæ, quo nunquam quies, nunquam Otium datur: Debellandæ sunt imprimis Voluptates, quæ, ut vides, sæva quoque ad ingenia rapuerunt, si quis sibi proposuerit, quantum Operis aggressus sit, sciet nihil delicate, nihil molliter esse faciendum. *Sen. Ep. 52.*

cise both for the *Body* and *Mind*, conducive to the *Health* and *Strength* of the one, and to the pure and spiritual Exercises of the other? *Self-Government* requires the greatest Care and Circumspection — A constant Guard should be set upon the Wanderings and Out-breakings of sensual Desires; and by these Means, the Heart, though *heavy-laden* for a while, will *soon find rest*, and its *Godly Sorrow* will gradually brighten into Joy. —

We are likewise told with great Pomp of Expression, that *Virtue talks not of Sufferance*: What? of no *Sufferance*? not even for *Righteousness Sake*? This is the *Crown of Virtue*; It finishes the Character of the *great Man*, the good *Christian*, and the accomplished *Heroe*.

Even *Humility* cannot escape the *Arrows* of bitter Words — though the greatest Ornament of the human Mind, it is *maliciously reported* of, as favouring of too much *Meanness* of Spirit — but quite the Reverse; There is a *Pusillanimity* in Pride, and a *Dignity* in *Humility*; The Man, that is *meek and lowly*, views Things in a true Light; He knows himself, both his Perfections and his Infirmities, and from a conscious Sense of both, He is taught to keep a due Ballance, to *value* the excellent Gifts of Nature, but to *cast down all high*  
*Ima-*



*Imaginations*, a Lesson above all others, which the *haughty Scorners* ought to learn :

Some Unbelievers take a different Course, and represent the Gospel as a narrow and defective Scheme contracting the *moral Circle* of Duty, and leaving out of it the most sublime and exalted Virtues, even *Friendship* and the *Love of our Country* :<sup>a</sup>

How little do they know of the Genius of *Christianity* ? which is so far from overlooking, or by any indirect Means superseding our most near and binding Connexions, that It extends its Goodness universally to all, to all Nations, to our greatest Enemies, to every Province of Humanity, but with a just and distinctive Regard to *those of our own Household*. —

In the last Result of Things, we are asked, if such are the essential Properties of Religion, why are They not productive of better Effects ? *Judge*, says the Infidel, of *the Tree* by its Fruits ? What are the *Ravages* of Superstition ? What a balefull Influence have they spread in all the Corners of the World ? But what Reasonings were ever carried on under more false or wicked Disguises ? What has true Religion to do with the evil Productions

of *Superstition*? We see the horrid *Effects* of the latter, how pernicious it is both to the temporal and spiritual Interests of Mankind in all the Kingdoms of *Popery*, and indeed *Protestants* above all others have felt the severe *Issues* of blind overheated Zeal hurried on by *Superstition*. —

But how different is the Genius and Completion of true *Religion*? — It is the Source of all the Blessings We enjoy, the pure and incorrupt *Fountain* both of private and publick Happiness:

We are told indeed by some Scoffers that all *Religions* are the same, instead of good, productive of a *Train* of Evils to Mankind. — But how unjust a Charge is this? to make Religion answerable for the *Lusts and Passions* of Men? The best Things are capable of *Abuse*, and may indeed be so perverted as to be made the unhappy *Occasion* of much mischief in the World. — But this is not the *Spirit* of true Religion, but the *Want of It*; The Fault is not in the *Rule* prescribed, but in those, that deviate from it. —

To fill up the *Measure of Iniquity*, or at least to shew a critical Sagacity above others, Some have *prophecied smooth Things* even to

a Tantum Religio potuit suadere Malorum. *Lucret.*

the

the Honour of *Vice* itself. — One of this *Fraternity* would be thought *wiser* than *Solomon* himself, who pronounces, that *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, but *Sin* is a *Reproach* to any *People*. — But this *Adventurer* pretends, that *private Vices* are *publick Benefits*, the *Pillars* of *Trade*, *Riches* and *national Prosperity*. — What strange *Infatuation* is this? not only inconsistent with the moral Perfections of the Deity, and with the Nature and Dignity of Man, but repugnant to the whole Order and Constitution of Things; It supposes *that* to be the *Bond*,<sup>a</sup> which is really the *Bane* of all social Happiness, and *makes its Beauty to consume away even as a Moth fretting a Garment*:<sup>b</sup> They, that endeavour to pull down *Religion*, and upon its *Ruins*, to erect *Temples to Vice*, are the greatest Enemies of Mankind; They are like the *Seducers* of old, saying, *Peace and there was no Peace*; and *One built up a Wall, and Lo! Others dawb'd it with untempered Mortar*. Ez. 13, 10.

<sup>a</sup> Polybius styles Religion, τὸ πᾶνδογμα τὸ πολιτικόν. Pol. Lib. 6. c. 54.

<sup>b</sup> Cupiditates enim sunt insatiabiles, quæ non modò singulos Homines, sed universas Familias vertunt, totam etiam labefaciunt sæpe Rempublicam; Ex Cupiditatibus, Odia, Diffidia, Discordiæ, Seditiones, Bella pascuntur. Cic. de Fin. Lib. 1.

Thus

Thus with hasty Steps have I run over the *beaten Track* of religious Controversy, not so much with a View of exposing the fallacious and sophistical Arts of Unbelievers, as with a Desire of setting in an opposite Light, and in their true *Colours* the many superior Advantages of a *Christian Faith* — Which was the *Second Thing* I proposed to consider. —

The *Prospect* now opens with *better Hopes* and *better Promises*. — The Gospel is the most compleat and perfect Scheme of moral Duty. Here *Mercy and Truth meet together, Righteousness and Peace kiss each other*. — Here Virtue shines in its true Lustre, and is distinctly unfolded in all its Views, not in a didactic Strain, with a formal elaborate Exactness, but with a free and unaffected *Regularity*; with *Brevity*, yet with *Perspicuity*, with *Plainness* and *Simplicity*, yet with *Dignity* and *Authority*, — Not with the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, but as *St. Paul* expresses it, in *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*. In this School of moral Discipline We are first taught to *know God*, and from thence we learn that excellent Lesson of *knowing ourselves*:

The whole *Oeconomy of the Mind* is here adjusted; *Purity of Thought* and *Truth in the inward*



*inward Parts* are the leading Principles, which open the Way for all Christian Perfections. — Every kind *Impression*, every generous instinctive Principle is cherished as in a good Soil; and like the opening *Buds* of Nature, are encouraged in their *Growth*, till they gradually ripen into *Fruit*: No Culture is wanting, that can possibly improve and enrich an *honest and good Heart*: —

The *Ballance* is happily preserved; The Passions and all the internal Appetites are kept under sober Restraints in a regular Subordination to the nobler Powers and Faculties of the Mind. —

: *Self-esteem* and *Poverty of Spirit*, *Faith* and *Reason*, *Liberty* and *Religion*, the *Wisdom of the Serpent* and the *Innocency of the Dove* are blended together with due Regulations, and are taught to move, as coordinate Principles, in their proper Sphere. —

No rigorous Austerities are imposed upon us, no heavy *Burthens*, no *Monkish Penances*; Even the *bitterest Cup* is mingled with *Sweetness*; Even the *Sufferance* of a Christian opens the *Door to Joys unspeakable and full of Glory*:

In every Branch of Self-Government whether it regards the *Health* of the *Body*, or *Peace* of *Mind*, the Gospel is a *reasonable Service*,

*Service, the Law of Truth and Liberty.* It enjoins only two *positive Institutions*, which are plain, easy and instructive, good and excellent Means of *Edification*. Neither does it look with a less propitious Eye upon all our publick and social Connexions — It is a Religion, all benign and gentle, *full of Mercy and good Fruits* — Its *Benevolence* is as diffusive, as human Nature itself; not confined to a little Circle of Friends, to this or that Sect or Party, but it enlarges the Heart, and extends its Goodness to the whole World, as to the *City of God*.<sup>a</sup>

Here are no Laws, that entrench upon the natural Rights of Mankind, or that in any respects weaken those sacred and inviolable Bands, by which we are incorporated together in one System, but without the least Tincture of a narrow and contracted *Selfishness* of Spirit, every humane and social Affection, every great and generous Sentiment, every disinterested and exalted Virtue is called forth in its full Scope and Latitude, and adapted with the nicest Propriety to all the several Relations, Subordinations, and Departments

<sup>a</sup> This was the noble Saying of Marcus Antoninus, Πόλις ἐξ  
καρπῆς, ὡς μὲν Ἀντωνίνου μὲν ἡ Πάρις, ὡς δὲ ἀνθρώπου, ἡ κόσμος.  
Lib. 5. Sec. 44.

in civil Society — The *Commandments of the Lord* are exceeding broad. —

And these amiable Virtues are not left to shift for themselves, and to fluctuate upon the uncertain *Tide of human Speculation*; but instead of being tossed to and fro with every *Wind of Doctrine* according to the different Tenets of this or that *School of Philosophy*, We have a fixed and invariable Rule of Action before Us, confirmed by the supreme and sovereign Will of God himself. —

And these our Obligations are heightened not merely by political but religious Considerations, as We are joint *Members of the same mystical Body in Christ*, and *Heirs of the same blessed Promises*:

Such is the operative Power of the Gospel. It affords every Motive of Reason, which can persuade, every Assistance of Grace, which can encourage, every Sanction of divine Authority, which can command the Obedience of rational Creatures:

In point of *Extent*, the Gospel-Morals have another eminent Advantage. — They are not intermixed with the Mazes and Intricacies of *Science falsely so called*; Without any *Defects or Redundancies*, We have one entire comprehensive System, neither too much relaxed  
nor

nor *overstrained* beyond the Bounds of Truth ;  
All the Lines of Duty are marked out with  
Clearness, with Precision, and in their full  
Circumference. —

We have seen, how Unbelievers vary in  
their moral Sentiments, sometimes curtailing,  
sometimes enlarging the Limits of Obligation  
as though it was in their own Power to make  
*Commutations* with God, and to prescribe an  
independent Rule of Action to themselves ac-  
cording to their own capricious Humours ;  
But the Gospel Precepts exhibit to Us the  
fairest *Portrait* of moral Virtue in its true  
Dimensions, neither diminished in any of its  
*Lineaments* and *Features*, nor distorted be-  
yond its just and natural Proportions. —

And if We judge of the *Tree* by its *Fruits*,  
by that *Criterion*, which the Unbeliever him-  
self makes choice of, We shall find the Gos-  
pel productive of the most happy and bene-  
ficial Effects. —

Consider those Nations, to whom the hea-  
venly Light of it never shone, I don't mean,  
those uncultivated *Savages*, whose natural  
Powers are immersed in Ignorance and Dark-  
ness, but the most *civilized Nations* in the  
World, and compare them, with those People,  
who



who enjoy the *Gospel* in all its Purity and Perfection. —

Religion was said to be the distinguishing Character of the *Romans*, and it is recorded by their Historians, as the grand *Basis* of all their Glory and Happiness; but how miserably were They involved in the darkest Clouds of *Idolatry* and *Superstition*? Their very Gods were in many Instances a *Disgrace* to human Nature; Their *national Vices* kept an even *Pace* with their *Greatness* and Power, till at last, when they both arrived to an enormous Size, a speedy *Destruction* fell upon the *greatest Empire* in the World, and consumed it like a *Pestilence*.

It may be asked, whether Christian Countries have not been infested with Crimes of as black and malignant a Nature? As to Principle and Profession at least, we may certainly answer in the *Negative*, We have no *Altars*

a Nec ullam etiam ad Immortalitatem Viam arbitrantur, quam exercitus ducere, aliena vastare, delere Urbes, Oppida ea scindere, liberos Populos aut trucidare, aut subicere Servituti — *Lac. Lib. I. 18.*

Quæ per totum Orbem singuli gesserint enarrare impossibile est, Quis enim Voluminum Numerus capiet tam infinita, tam varia Genera Crudelitatis? *Lac. Lib. 5.*

Mores Majorum non paulatim ut antea, sed Torquentis modo precipitati. *Sallust. Fragment. p. 139.*

erected

erected to *Vice*, no *human Sacrifices*, no *Exposing* of *Infants*, or *Gladiatorial Butcheries*, which give a *Shock* even to *Humanity* itself<sup>b</sup>, but through the *Mercies* of *Christ*, We have a *Standard* of *Duty* before us, of another *Genius* and *Complection*—The *Rule*, by which We walk, is *holy* and *just* and *good*; and though there are too many repeated *Violations* of it arising from the *Lusts* and *Passions* of *Men*, and often from the evil *Contagion* of *Infidelity*, yet the *Face* of *Things* is happily changed by the kind *Influence* of *Christianity*, which has greatly refined the *Principles*, humanized the *Temper*s, and sweetened the *Manners* of *Men*:<sup>b</sup>

One would think, that a *Religion* so pure and *disinterested*, and adorned on every *Side*

a When *Demonax* was asked by the *Athenians*, whether the *Gladiatorial Shews* should be exhibited, what a generous Reply did that *Philosopher* make? *not*, says he, till the *Altar of Mercy* is taken away; *μη σφόδρον, ἔφη, ταῦτα, ὧς Ἀθηναῖοι; ψηφισοῦσι, αἷ μὴ τῷ ἱερὶ τὸν Βωμὸν κητέλεται*: *Luciani Demonax*.

b *Eusebius* gives us a singular Testimony of the good Effects of *Christianity*—Οὐτε οἱ ἐν Παρθίᾳ Χερσικαὶ πολυζάμυσι, πέρθει ὑπάρχοντες; ἔθ' οἱ ἐν Μηδίᾳ κυρὶ παραδόλῃσι τὰς νικῆς. Οὐχ οἱ ἐν Περσίῃ ζαμύσι τὰς θυγατέρας αὐτῶν, πρὸς ἑντες. Οὐ παρὰ Βάκτροις καὶ Γάλλοις φθείρουσι τὰς ζάμυς· ἔχ οἱ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ θρησκύουσι τὸ Ἄπιν, ἢ τὸ πύνα, ἢ τὸ Τρέγον, ἢ Αἰλουρον. Ἀλλ' ὅπου εἰσὶν, ἔτι ὑπὸ τῶ κακῶς κειμένῳ νόμῳ, καὶ ἔθῳ νικῶνται. *Euseb. Præp. Evan. 6, 10. ex Bardeſanis scriptis.*

with

with all the *Charms* of moral Excellence might win upon the Affections and command the Approbation of all, but the *foolish Hearts* of some Men are darkened, Men of corrupt *Minds*, and reprobate concerning the Faith, who really have no *Gloak* for their Sin, but as They often affect some specious Pretences for their Conduct, though it is but a *false Varnish*, I shall proceed in the third place, to consider some of the principal *Pleas* of *Unbelievers*:

First, We are told, as a general Apology for all Errors whatsoever, even those of the *Atheist* as well as the *Deist*, that every Man has a *Right* of private Judgment; and He that judges *sincerely* and according to the best of his Knowledge, is chargeable with no Crime either in the *Sight* of God or Man:

The *Right* of private Judgment cannot be called in Question; so far we join Issue with the Unbeliever—As we are rational Creatures, we may certainly claim it as our *Birth-right*; It is sealed and confirmed to Us by the original Charter of *Nature*:

As We are Christians, the *Liberty* of judging for our selves is our Duty, that glorious Privilege, by which *Christ* has made us free,  
It

It is the *safest Preservative* of our own Faith, and the *best Means* of Defence against the *Wiles and Devices of false Teachers*:

And especially, as we are protestants, We know, that it was an honest and ingenious Freedom of Enquiry, which first emancipated our Ancestors from the heavy and grievous Yoke of *Superstition*, and we must still maintain our Ground upon the same Principles—This will always be the strongest Fence against the slavish Doctrines and domineering Practices of the *Church of Rome*.

But how do Unbelievers shoot their arrows even bitter Words against all, that is venerable and Sacred, not with a Spirit of *Liberty*, but by a wilful Abuse of it, not with an *honest and good Heart* in the Pursuit of Truth, but under a false and dissembled *Cloke of Maliciousness*?

But not to call their Sincerity in Question, how often is it, that They are misguided by their *Lusts*, by strange Devices of their own *Invention*, by *Pride* and Prejudice, by a Fondness for Innovation, or perhaps a *Sceptical Turn* of Mind too much indulged? Under such Prepossessions, like the *deaf-Adder*, they stop their Ears against the *Voice* of Truth, and are so far from having any Claim to the Character



Character of *Free-thinkers*, that They *fetter* their own *Understandings*, and offer a *Violence* to *Reason*, the pretended *Idol* of their own *Hearts*.

It cannot be thought, that *Errors* arising from all or any of these *Causes*, can with any *Propriety* be called *innocent*:

But suppose them to be under no false *Byass*, that they are sincere and diligent, dispassionate and unprejudiced in their *Searches* after *Truth*, and that, if they *do err*, it is not owing to any *Heretical Depravity* of *Mind*, but to a peculiar *Cast of Thought*, which the best *Use* of their *Understandings* could not possibly prevent.

In this case, which I am afraid, but seldom happens, ought not such ingenuous Enquirers to be cautious, how They broach *Doctrines* repugnant to the general *Sense* of *Mankind*? Should not *Prudence* as well as *Modesty*, incline them to review their *Opinions*, to weigh them over and over in the *Scale* of *Reason*, and unless the *Glare* of *Truth* be irresistible indeed, rather to distrust their own private *Judgments*, than pretend to be *wiser* than *publick Wisdom* itself?

a Errare possum, Hæreticus esse Nolo — How often has this Motto been misapplied by *Unbelievers*?

We

We may be told perhaps, that They have done all this, that They have thoroughly, and impartially considered the Argument in all its Parts, both the Evidence for, and the Objections against it, and that upon a just *Calculation* and a full *Conviction*, the *Force* of Truth had such a commanding Influence upon their Minds, that they could not withstand it; They thought it a Duty owing to their Fellow-Creatures to open *their Eyes*, and to release them of those heavy *Chains*, with which They had long been shackled by the impositions of arbitrary and magisterial Authority;—Here is a fine Opening indeed—*Church-Power* and *Church Establishments* never fail to become the Topicks of Entertainment; and to compleat the *Feast*, a little Seasoning of the Priesthood must be thrown in; Such is the common Cant of Infidelity; It is indeed a specious and popular Cry; There is a kind of *Charm* in the very *Name* of Liberty too often made use of to sanctify the worst Designs, both in Government and Religion.

Under these Colours, the Unbeliever marches into the *Field* of Controversy, disputes boldly, and with a Zeal, though not *according to knowledge*, is ready to *compass sea and land* to gain *Profelites*:—But what are the *Fruits* of all

his *Labour*?—He endeavours to unhinge the Principles of Men, to raise Doubts and Difficulties in their Minds, to rob them of their best Hopes and Comforts, to throw off all national Regard for the great Duties of Religion, and to trample under Foot the established Laws of Society as well as those of God:—A conscious Sense of Error, if not of Guilt, would certainly be more becoming a *Champion* in such a Cause than his boasted *Innocence*:

But, *secondly*, it is alledged by some of them, that They have a true and unfeigned Regard for the essential Points of Religion; that in such Enquiries, there is no *Intricacy* at all, that Reason is of itself a *sufficient* Guide, unincumbered with those slavish *Embarrassments*, which ever did, and necessarily must attend the fictitious systems of revealed Religion, however pompously recommended in the Name of God, with a solemn Air of divine Authority.

This is a stale Objection, and has been often answered with great Clearness and Strength of Reasoning.

I shall only at present, observe, that if these publick *Reformers* had really the Interest of natural Religion at Heart, they would not act with

with such open and avowed Enmity towards the Gospel, which is not only a *Republication of the Law of Nature*, but adds Weight, Authority, and Perfection to it.

The *Law of Nature* considered abstractedly of itself, is an imperfect Rule of Action to moral Agents, inferior to the Gospel, as neither so clear in its Counsels, so comprehensive in its extent, so engaging in its Motives, nor so binding and forcible in its Commands.

Many Truths are out of the *natural* Man's Sight, not deducible from unassisted Reason, or if They were plain and obvious to the Views of Men of distinguished Penetration and Discernment, yet how few would be capable of making such regular Deductions? How few would be at the Pains of carrying on their Researches into the abstruse Nature and relations of things? Or that would have *Leisure* and *Opportunity* for such deep and important Enquiries?

Or if the *moral Rule* was ever so plain and open to the Understandings of Men, how often would it be perverted by sensual Lusts and Appetites and other incidental Causes, which would obstruct the free Use and Exercise of their rational Faculties, and *cause* even the  
*Light,*



*Light, which is in them, to become Darkness?*

Or we may go farther, if Men were ever so able and willing to find out Truth in all its Parts genuine and uncorrupt, yet this would still be no more than mere *Speculation*, a *moral Science* only, which with a soft and gentle Attraction, might sensibly touch the Springs and Motions of the Soul, but not with Strength and Efficacy enough to controul the Actions of Men: Greater Power and Authority must be requisite to counteract the Passions, and to keep the unruly Appetites in a due Subjection, to Reason.

What therefore could be more apposite to the Wants of human Nature, more beneficial to Mankind, or more worthy of the divine Wisdom, than a *written Law* granted by God to be the fixed and standing Rule of our Conduct, as a supplemental Aid to the internal Oracle of our own Minds, which the Apostle calls, the *Law written in our Heart*?

\* The wisest Men in all Ages have confessed

a Ye may even give over, says Socrates, all Hopes of amending Men's Manners for the future, unless God be pleased to send You some other Person to instruct You.

Εἴτε τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον καθιύδοντες διαπείτε ἄν, εἰ μὴ τίνα ἄλλου ἱμῶν ὁ Θεὸς ἐπιμίμῃας κηρύμειν ὁρῶν.

the

the Want of such heavenly Assistance; and none but the Fools of the *present*, would renounce it, but *they know not what They say; nor whereof they affirm*: Without regard to Truth, they suck in their Objections as with a *Sponge*, and though the foul malignant *Matter* is easily squeezed out, They are soon replenished with the *Gall of Bitterness*, and swell again to their usual Compass; but Wo unto them, says the Prophet, *that are wise in their own Eyes, that call evil good, and good evil, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, that take away the Righteousness of the Righteous from Him. Is. 5. 21.*

Having thus done with the Unbeliever, I shall only apply what has been said to the Friends of revealed Religion, and I hope, the Application in this place above all others will not be thought improper. — It is not only our Happiness to have the *Mind of Christ* in common with other Christians, but it is here, that the *Temple of the Lord* is fixed in it's highest Beauty and Splendor, and how ought They, who are Ministers of the *Sanctuary*, to guard it, with care and caution, with all the Efforts of Courage, Wisdom and Perseverance, like the *Priests* who bare the *Ark of the Covenant* of the Lord, and stood firm on Dry Ground

*Ground in the midst of Jordan. Josh. 3. 17.*

In this Age of free Enquiry, the Enemy is under little or no Restraint, either civil or religious; He sows his Tares even in Broad Day-Light, and at a Time, when Luxury and Dissipations of all kinds abound, the exuberance of the Soil is naturally productive of Weeds and Thorns—The Vineyard therefore, that is set apart for the Growth of better things, for the Culture and Improvement of Religion and Learning, ought to be watched with Diligence, and fenced in on every Side, lest the insidious Adversary should break in unawares, and corrupt the good Seed of Truth; It must indeed be allowed that a narrow, partial and bigotted Attachment to any human Systems whatsoever, is a Bar to the Improvement of Science, and to the Investigation of all Truth; Errors once imbibed under such prepossessions, never can be removed; but a groundless Thirst for Novelty, merely for the sake of Novelty, is by no means a Mark of liberal Enquiry or rational Criticism, but rather looks like the Project of an unskillful Architect, who finds fault with the venerable Garb of Antiquity, as favouring too much of a Gothic Taste, and erects another Edifice, perhaps

haps of a more modern Cast, but less Beauty, Grandeur and Utility.

They, to whose approved Fidelity the Instruction of *Youth* is committed, should be mindful of that important Trust, and exert their best Endeavours to season the tender Minds of those under their Care, with early Principles of Piety and Virtue; The first Impressions are generally the strongest, and if well-fixed and *rooted in the Mind*, will endure even to Old Age.

And there is another local Obligation upon Us, which I cannot forbear to mention, I mean the *extensive Influence*, which our sacred Regards for Religion must necessarily have upon the rest of Mankind; It is from these *Seminaries*, that the Gospel is propagated, and its *Sound* goes into *all the Earth* not only into our own Provinces but the remotest *Corners* of the World; and if They, that *minister in holy Things*, are themselves tainted with the Poison of Unbelief, how great must the Contagion be? how universal in the Spread of it? and how fatal to the Souls of Men? If they, that ought to be the greatest Fountains of Truth and Knowledge, are themselves corrupt, how can the Streams, which flow from them, be *pure and undefiled*? What can stop the *Torrent*



rent of Ignorance, Superstition, and infidelity.

Lastly, as Christianity is the fruitful Source of so many Blessings and Advantages to Mankind; how much is it the Duty of all Christians whatsoever, to support its true Interests not only in Obedience to God, and to the great Author and Finisher of our Faith, but through a Regard likewise to the Order, Virtue and Happiness of the whole Community of which we are Members.

For the Salvation of our own Souls as well as the Good of others, let us take heed, lest there be in any of Us an evil Heart of Unbelief in departing from the Living God — Let us daily revolve in our Minds the Joys and Triumphs of a true Christian Faith, and though it be a disagreeable Contrast, let us often reflect upon the unhappy Circumstances of those, who, when They are not aware, shall be cut asunder, and have their Portion with the Unbelievers.

F I N I S.

## ERRATA.

Page 16. (in the Note) for *Manlius Torquatus*, read *Manlius*.  
Page 26. (in the Note) for *cognosciamus*, read *cognoscamus*.  
for *permunere*, read *permanere*.

